

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5227

INFO DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0508

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, MR, SS

SUBJECT: PROPOSED TRIP TO DAKHLA

DIA FOR AH-8

SUMMARY: MONROVIA-BASED DATT AIRCRAFT IS IN MAURITANIA THIS WEEK TRANSPORTING AMBASSADOR, DATT. AND/OR EMBASSY OFFICERS TO VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN COUNTRY. THIRD AND LAST TRIP HAS BEEN LEFT OPEN DEPENDING ON SITUATION IN MAURITANIAN PORTION OF SAHARA. UNLESS WASHINGTON AGENCIES PERCEIVE OBJECTION, MISSION PLANS TO HAVE DCM AND DATT FLY TO DAKHLA MARCH 5 FOR BRIEF VISIT. END SUMMARY.

1. BACKGROUND: MONROVIA-BASED AIR ATTACHE PLANE IS IN MAURITANIA THIS WEEK TO SUPPORT EMBASSY AND DAKAR-BASED DATT. AMBASSADOR AND DATT VISITED AYOUNG EL ATROUS AND NEMA MARCH 2 AND DEPARTED TODAY FOR OVERNIGHT VISIT TO ATAR AND ZOUIRAT. IN VIEW OF UNCERTAINTY OF SAHARA SITUATION, MISSION PLANNED OUT TWO ALTERNATIVE ITINERARIES FOR FRIDAY/SATURDAY SEQUENCE. FIRST PREFERENCE: NOUAKCHOTT-DAKHLA (ON GROUND FOR FOUR TO FIVE HOURS)-NOUAKDHIBOU (OVERNIGHT)-RETURN TO NOUAKCHOTT SATURDAY AFTERNOON. SECOND CHOICE: NOUAKCHOTT-KIFFA-TIDJIKDJA (OVERNIGHT)-NOUAKCHOTT. AMBASSADOR WILL NOT RPT NOT GO ON EITHER OF THESE TRIPS; INSTEAD DCM AND DATT WILL MAKE ONE OR OTHER OF ALTER-
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NATIVES. PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF DAKHLA TRIP IS TO GET FIRST-HAND

LOOK AT CIVIL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN CAPITAL OF NEW REGION OF WADI DHEHAB VIA DIRECT CONTACT WITH GIRM CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICIALS ON SCENE. GIRM (ACTING MINISTER STATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND TRANSPORT, AND MILITARY HQ) HAVE APPROVED BOTH ALTERNATIVES FOR FRIDAY-SATURDAY SEQUENCE. GIRM IS NOW AWAITING INDICATION OF OUR CHOICE. MILITARY, IN ADDITION, MAY SEND ESCORT OFFICER TO ACCOMPANY DATT ON HIS CALLS IF WE DECIDE TO GO TO DAKHLA.

2. DISCUSSIONS: (A) WE APPRECIATE THAT PROPOSED TRIP TO DAKHLA RAISES NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, SUCH AS CURRENT LEGAL STATUS OF WADI DHEHAB. DESPITE ABSENCE OF FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCORPORATION OF WADI DHEHAB INTO MAURITANIA, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT GIRM CONSIDERS AREA TO BE INTEGRAL PART OF MAURITANIA AND DAKHLA, AS REGIONAL CAPITALS. FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXACT PARTITION LINE IS IMMATERIAL SINCE DAKHLA IS SOUTH OF ANY LINE WHICH HAS BEEN DISCUSSED. MOROCCO ALSO CONSIDERS SOUTHERN AREA TO BE INTEGRAL PART OF MAURITANIA JUST AS NORTHERN PART IS VIEWED AS PART OF MOROCCO. PARALLEL STATEMENTS BY GIRM AND GOM ASSERTING SAHARA QUESTION IS CLOSED, AND DECLARATION THAT ANY INCURSION BY POLISARIO OR ALGERIAN PERSONNEL INTO WADI DHEHAB OR SAGIET EL HAMRA WILL BE CONSIDERED FOREIGN INVASION OF SOVEREIGN TERRITORY FROM ALGERIA AND WILL AS CONSEQUENCE BE VIGOROUSLY REPULSED, RESTATES AND EMPHASIZES GIRM/GOM VIEW THAT SAHARA IS NOW INTEGRAL PART OF TWO COUNTRIES. (B) CAN WE BE REASONABLY ASSURED OF SAFETY OF PASSENGERS, CREW AND AIRCRAFT IN DAKHLA? GIRM ASST CHIEF OF STAFF DECLARED MARCH 1 THAT DAKHLA IS COMPLETELY SECURE. SPANISH EMBOFF ALSO REPORTS EVERYTHING IS QUIET IN DAKHLA. THERE HAVE BEEN NO INCIDENTS THERE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. WE THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT SECURITY OF PEOPLE AND AIRCRAFT CAN BE ASSURED FOR THE SEVERAL HOURS PERSONNEL PLAN TO BE ON GROUND. FLIGHT PLAN, WHICH WILL BE ALMOST ENTIRELY OVER WATER AT 15,000 TO 20,000 FEET ALTITUDE, VIRTUALLY ELIMINATES ANY PROBLEM BY STRAY POLISARIO ADHERENTS. (C) LOOKING AT POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS, USG HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED ITS POLITICAL SUPPORT OF MAURITANIAN AND MOROCCAN POSITION ON SAHARA IN ITS TWO UN VOTES. IT HAS DEMONSTRATED IN ADDITION ITS VIGOROUS SUPPORT OF MOROCCO VIA ONGOING MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, MAP PROGRAM, AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW SALES. WE CONFIDENTIAL

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DO NOT BELIEVE BRIEF VISIT BY MID-LEVEL US OFFICIALS IN USG C-12A AIRCRAFT CAN BE OBJECTIVELY INTERPRETED BY ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT OR OTHER POLISARIO SUPPORTERS AS SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATION OF POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR GIRM NOR SURPRISING DECLARATION OF NEW POSITION. MOREOVER, VISIT OF ONE PASSENGER AIRPLANE AND HALF-DOZEN US OFFICIALS (INCLUDING CREW) ADDS NO SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT TO EXISTING US SUPPORT FOR GIRM/GOM NOR SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION TO ALGERIAN POSITION. ON OTHER

HAND. THIS SMALL GESTURE WOULD BE VIEWED BY GIRM AS MODEST INDICATION OF US SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT. SERIOUS MILITARY DISTURBANCES WHICH WERE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW I) FINAL DEPARTURE OF SPANISH, AND (II) DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENT SAHARAWI (POLISARIO) STATE HAVE NOT OCCURRED. POLITICAL BROUHAHA HAS BEEN EVEN LESS THAN ANTICIPATED. OVERALL, THEREFORE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT TRIP TO DAKHLA WOULD NOT UPSET PRESENT BALANCE, NOR PRODUCE ANY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE POLITICAL IMPACT.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS: WE BELIEVE TRIP CAN BE MADE SAFELY AND WITHOUT ADVERSE POLITICAL IMPACT ON US INTERESTS. TRIP WILL ALSO PROVIDE VERY USEFUL REPORTING OPPORTUNITY. UNLESS MISSION IS INSTRUCTED TO CONTRARY BY 1500 GMT THURSDAY, MARCH 4, WE PLAN TO HAVE DCM AND DATT TAKE OFF AT FIRST LIGHT FRIDAY MORNING IN USAF C-12A PASSENGER AIRCRAFT FOR DAKHLA AND NOU-ADHIBOU.

4. DATT CONCURS WITH THIS MESSAGE.

5. PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT THIS MESSAGE.HANDYSIDE

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